

**LOVE LETS IT GO**  
**40 Days of Love - Part 4**  
**Rick Warren**

Welcome to weekend number four in 40 Days of Love. You look far more loving than you did a month ago. We're working on everybody getting a master's degree in love, becoming a world class lover, getting a black belt in love so that you know how to handle relationships and how to make them meaningful.

Life is all about learning to love. We've established that fact. We've been looking at it in small groups and in our daily reading with the Relationship Principles of Jesus then here on the weekends. One of the ways that God builds your love is he tests it. He tests it by putting you around unlovely people. It's easy to love loving people. But for God to teach you real love he's going to put you around unlovely people.

This morning what I want us to look at is what I call special cases. These are people that I call VDP – Very Draining People. You're going to recognize every one of them when I mention them. There are four special cases. There are Difficult people. There are Demanding people. There are Disappointing people. There are Destructive people. You have all four of these in your life and you will throughout your life. God says I want you to learn to love these people too in the way that's best for them and in the way that I want you to do it.

Difficult people. That's the easy one. You know who those are. They're just people who are just hard to work with. They're hard to get along with. They seem to be unpleasable. They're cranky. They're crazy makers. They can be irresponsible. They can be immature. They can have personality defects. The lights are on but nobody's home. The elevator doesn't go all the way to the top. A few fries short of a happy meal. They're just not all there. They may be a little deficient in social skills. But one of the primary characteristics of difficult people is they're rude. They typically are just rude. They can be obnoxious. It's hard to love obnoxious people. Would you agree with that? Difficult people.

The second type of person that's a VDP are Demanding people. We all know who demanding people are. They have an agenda. They're aggressive. They're pushy. Whenever you're around a demanding person you always feel a little bit manipulated. It's like they want it their way and it's got to be right and they tend to be insistent. They tend to be stubborn. They tend to think they're always right. They can be very self-centered because they're not thinking about anybody else. They can be demeaning. It's my way or the highway. Oftentimes they will expect perfection of you. Demanding people are pushy people. We have those in our lives.

Then the third kind of person are the Disappointing people. These people don't always mean to hurt you but sometimes they're actually well intentioned. But they disappoint you. They just let you down. Maybe they break promises that they say they'll keep or they fail you in some way. Or it could be more serious than that. Disappointing people could be unfaithful to you. Disappointing people could be disloyal to you. They can break vows that they've made to you. You're going to have disappointing people in your life and you have to learn how to love them in the way that God wants you to love them.

The most difficult of all are the Destructive people. These people want to harm you. They're intentional. It's sad to say but there is evil in the world and there are hateful people and there are people who are double dealing, who are deceitful, who mean harm to you. They can be deadly.

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They can be disingenuous. They can be dangerous. They can be debilitating. But they're in your life. The destructive people who hurt you, who harm you, who wound you.

How do you respond in love to each of these groups of people?

One verse in the Bible, actually the chapter we've been looking at in our small groups – 1 Corinthians 13 – the love chapter. Verse 5 tells us the four ways that love deals with these four types of people. It says *"Love is not rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and love keeps no record of when it has been wronged."* When you understand these four and you begin to build them into your life you graduate from the Bachelor's degree level of love to the Master's degree level of love.

The first type of VDP – very draining person – that you're going to have to learn to deal with in life, and learn to love, are Difficult people.

Have you noticed there are a lot of them? They're all over. Have you noticed that the world tends to be becoming more rude not more civil? People are increasingly rude. You can find rudeness everywhere. At school, at work, at home, in restaurants, in stores, on the freeway, all around you.

I'd like to ask you to participate in a little survey with me right now. If I were to ask you what form of rudeness irritates you the most, would you think about that for a minute? Then I'm going to ask you to take about five seconds and share it with your neighbor. I'm going to give you my top ten list of the things that tick Pastor Rick off. But before I give you my list I want you to turn to somebody and say, "One thing that really bugs me..." and don't say, "Pastors who ask me to participate in a service and talk to a total stranger." But turn to somebody and say, "One of the things that I find rude is..." Talk to somebody next to you. Don't give them your whole list. Just one thing!

Let me give you my list. These are the top ten rude acts that bug me:

10. People who call you and then say, "Who is this?" Before they identify themselves. I'm going, No, no. You tell me who *you* are before I tell you who *I* am.

9. People who slurp their soup. That may not bug you but I think soup should be seen and not heard.

8. People who honk their horn in traffic jams that are going no where. The guy's honking, nobody's moving. That's really helpful! What a waste of energy.

7. People who play loud rap music on their boom box at the beach.

6. People who light their cigarette then hold it towards you instead of smoking. By the way, they're not really smokers. It's the cigarette that smokes. They're the suckers. (That was rude, now that I think about it. I apologize. Please forgive me.)

5. People who cheat at the ten-item grocery express line. I counted – get out of the line, buddy! Take a hike!

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4. People who send me junk mail. I get a lot of that.
3. People who leave church early during the offering.
2. Same as number three.
1. People who come from the opposite direction and steal the parking spot you've been patiently waiting for. Ever had that happen?

How do you respond in love to difficult people?

The Bible says *"Love is not rude."* So **I must be tactful, not just truthful.** Love is tactful. In other words you don't return their rudeness. You overcome evil with good. You don't respond in kind. When people are difficult, you don't be difficult back.

One of the ways that you can be tactful is simply by listening to them first. They may have a point. If you listen to people sympathetically and then you respond tactfully, that is the loving response to a difficult person. You listen lovingly then you respond lovingly.

This thing about listening really goes with tact because the number one form of rudeness in our society today – I'm guilty of it every single day of my life – you are too. Interrupting people. Not listening. It is rude to not listen. It is rude to not let somebody finish their sentence. I do this all the time. My brain runs fast and I think I know what people are going to say and I answer back. That's dumb.

Look what the Bible says about this – Proverbs 18:13 *"Answering before listening is both stupid and rude."* This concludes today's sermon! Go and do likewise!

Everybody does this. We are rude because we jump to conclusions. We assume we know what other people think. No. Tact is listening. Love listens. And then love responds tactfully not just truthfully. And not interrupting.

It says answering before listening is stupid and rude. People with tact have less to retract. You're not going to have to eat your words if you listen first. Love listens and love is tactful.

*"Stop being bitter and angry and mad at each other. Don't yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude. [Circle "ever be rude."] Instead, be kind and merciful and forgiving. Forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ."* Love listens and love is tactful.

Notice it says don't yell at one another. Anybody ever do that? Yeah! And don't lie too. Don't curse at each other. Profanity requires zero intelligence. It requires no IQ. You can teach a parrot to curse. Profanity is no sign of intelligence. In fact, it's a sign that you can't think of a better word at that point.

It was Eric Hoffer who said, "Rudeness is a weak man's imitation of strength." Think about that. It's not manly to cuss. Some people think they're being frank but they're just being rude. People who say, "I just speak my mind," and they're proud of that. "I just tell it like it is." And

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they're proud of that. Actually telling it like it is is not the best way to communicate. Telling it like it could be, telling it like it should be, telling it like it might be, telling it like it could be with hope, that actually builds people up.

Telling it like it is just labels people. If I came to you and said, "You're all messed up," what does that do? *Yeah, I'm messed up. Look how messed up I am.* It just reinforces. Telling it like it is reinforces the negative. Telling it like it could be – you could be a great woman of God. You could be a great man of God. You could make a difference with your life. That helps people move forward.

A lot of times frankness is honestly just rudeness. You need to ask yourself, why am I saying it this way? Am I saying it so that I can let off steam? Or am I saying it really for the benefit of the other person.

Proverbs 16:21 *"A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is."* Circle "pleasant" and circle "persuasive" and draw a line between them. The more pleasant you are, the more persuasive you are. You might write down under this verse "I'm never persuasive when I'm abrasive." When I'm abrasive with my wife, when I'm abrasive with my kids, when I'm abrasive with clerks, when I'm abrasive with anybody... I'm never persuasive. Nagging doesn't work. Does it work on you? No. Doesn't work on anybody.

I don't know if you've watched any of the political debates – the presidential, the vice-presidential debate. But at the bottom of some of these channels they have these little graphs of whether people approved or disapproved of what they were saying at that second. I noticed that whenever either side went on the attack the approval rate went down. I'm never persuasive when I'm abrasive. People just go, that's not the way to get it across. You don't get your point across by being cross.

The way you say something determines the way it's received. If you say it offensively it's going to be received defensively. That's why love is all about your words. It's all about tact. It's being truthful – you're not lying about it – but it's saying it tactfully. Be tactful not just truthful.

Tact and tone go together. They always go together. It's the way you say it. It's the tone of your voice. You can say something very difficult but if you say it in the right tone it will be received much better. You say it in a loving tone.

In fact the tone can change the very meaning of the word. For instance, think of all the way you can say "Hello." I could give you thirty different ways to say hello and you would get a totally different message from me each time. Same word, different message. Tone and tact go together.

The Bible says you want to have a master's degree in love, love is not rude. It means you're tactful not just truthful. When someone's rude to you, you don't retaliate. Masters in love don't retaliate.

I remember probably twenty years ago Lee and Penny, long term members of this church, their son Doug was just a kid at the time going to Little League. They had had a Little League game where his team just got creamed by the opposite team. After it was over the opposite team

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member came up to him and said “Your team sucks!” Doug, he’s just a kid at the time, looked at him and said, “You pitched a great game.” You know that kid went away wishing he hadn’t said that. Because when you get even with somebody it puts you on the same level with them. But when you return good for evil it puts you above them.

Do you want to be below them? Attack them. Do you want to be even with them? Get even with them. Do you want to be above them? Say something nice back. It all depends on where you want to be. Love is tactful not just truthful.

The second kind of group you’re going to have to deal with is Demanding people.

These are the people who always want their way. They’ve always got a right way and a wrong way to do it. And your way is always the wrong way. You can never quite please them. This second type of people you have to deal with in life, they’ve got their standards and if you don’t meet their standards they’re going to let you know about it. How do you respond in love to demanding people?

The Bible says “*Love does not demand its own way*” so **I must be understanding, not demanding.**

Jesus is the best example of this. Philippians 2. “*Your attitude should be the same that Jesus Christ had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.*” He was God but he was understanding, not demanding. Circle “*did not demand and cling to his rights.*”

Anytime you hear somebody at a restaurant or at a ticket counter saying, “I have my rights!” they’re being demanding not understanding. One of the greatest tests of your character is how you treat the people who serve you. The waiters, the waitresses, the flight attendants, the people at fast food places, the mail person who delivers your mail, gardeners, secretaries, employees, people who work with you. How do you treat the people who help you out? Do you even notice them? Do you know their names? Do you know the names of the people who clean your house if your house is cleaned? Do you know the names of people who serve you in different ways? It’s treating people with respect and you be understanding, not demanding.

I travel a lot. I found pretty quickly that around the world Americans have a pretty bad reputation for being demanding. We are considered to be a very demanding group of tourists. Americans want it their way and they want it their way now. That concept of the ugly American who is not understanding but demanding is really all around.

So when our team travels – Dave and Steve and others and myself – we try to bend over backwards to befriend and to be understanding of the people who help us. If I’m in an airport, the president of Delta or the vice president makes no difference to me – but I do want to know the names of the baggage attendant and the checking in person, being nice to the people who help you get on the plane and help you get seated. We have done this in airports. We actually have friends all around the world in airports, Steve and I do. They’re not the people who run the airports. They’re the people who sweep up and help with baggage – it’s just knowing people and treating them with respect and learning their names and befriending them.

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I've discovered that the secret of great service – this isn't why you do it but the secret of great service is simply respect people. So few people are actually respected. They do their job and nobody's even looking at them. Nobody's paying attention to them. Nobody's considering their feelings. Nobody's sympathetic of what they're going through. Nobody respects them.

So here's my homework for you this week. I want you to practice being understanding, not demanding. If you go out to lunch this afternoon or you go to a store, be understanding not demanding, realizing that that clerk may have had a tough time. May have just gotten chewed out by their boss or whatever. If you go to a movie, just be nice to the people there.

By the way, have you seen this movie *Fireproof*? That is a great movie. If you haven't seen it yet, you need to go see *Fireproof*. It's a low budget film made by a sister church of ours, Sherwood Church in Georgia. It's probably the best movie on marriage I've ever seen. It's terrific. If you want to get married, if you want to improve your marriage, you want to strengthen your marriage you need to go see *Fireproof* because it's got a great message and a lot of good truth in it. And it was done by a church, just volunteers in the church with a couple of well known actors that they hired for the main roles.

But practice being understanding not demanding. You know the best place to practice it? How about home? Sometimes we're more polite to strangers than we are to the people in our lives. I've said this before, that I don't know if it bothers you but it bothers me that sometimes I say the meanest things, the most unthoughtful things to the people I love the most. I don't know if that bothers you but it bothers me. It bothers me a lot that I could be nice to strangers and not nice in the same capacity to people I'm around all the time.

Titus 3:2 "*Believers shouldn't curse anyone or be quarrelsome, but they should be gentle and show courtesy to everyone.*" Circle "courtesy." What is courtesy? Courtesy is showing love in little things. That's what it is. Showing love in the little things. You be kind to people.

A lot of marriages die from a lack of courtesy. Because the things that you used to do for each other you don't do any more. The little niceties, the thoughtful things, the notes, the cards, the flowers, the calls, the courtesies – opening the door, the let-me-get-that-for-you, not get it yourself! A lot of marriages are buried from a lot of little digs. Just a lack of courtesy.

How do you be more understanding of people who are demanding in your life?

The Bible tells us that patience comes from perspective. That the more you understand about a person the more patient you're going to be with them. I'm impatient with people I don't understand. But when I know them, and I know them well, I'm going to know what I call the three B's – their background, their battles and their burdens. You need before you get sharp and short with anybody, you need to say, do I know their background? Do I know the battles they're going through right now? Do I know the burdens they're carrying? That's going to make you a lot more courteous to other people.

We often look at people and go, look how far they have to go. But we don't stop and say, I wonder how far they've come? Maybe they were raised in a family where they had no model of kindness, no model of courtesy. Maybe they grew up in a very dysfunctional home and they've

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gotten this far and they ought to be applauded for that. We always look at how far they've got to go. We don't look at how far they've come.

So I look at their background. I look at their burdens. What are the problems they're carrying? They may be sick. They may have a temperature. The reason they may be a little irritable or demanding is they're not feeling good. Maybe they've got a back problem. The surgery hasn't come yet. There are all kinds of battles and burdens that people carry that you and I don't know about. Love is understanding not demanding.

*"A man's wisdom [that means having that perspective] gives him patience. [Patience comes from perspective.] It is his glory to overlook an offense."* Do you overlook offenses or are you offended by offenses? Are you so touchy and irritable that anybody looks at you crosswise or forgets to say something or walks past you and didn't see you, you get that offensive? The Bible says, it is a glory to a man's or woman's character to overlook an offense. Just blow it off. Love lets it go.

While we're talking about it, this is what we call the golden rule. *"Do to others as you would have them do to you."* That's all we're talking about. In being understanding, not demanding – do to others what you would have them do to you.

What happens with demanding people? Does that mean I'm just supposed to let them run over me? Somebody who is a demanding person. Do I just let them push me around? Do I just act like a doormat, just always cave in and say whatever you want.

No. Here's the key: Be tender without surrender. You don't let people just push you around. Jesus never caved in to manipulators. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, always tried to manipulate Jesus. They were extremely demanding. They were very legalistic. They had all kinds of demands that they themselves couldn't even keep. Jesus would not let other demanding people push him into a corner. You be tender without surrender. That's what you call love in action.

There's a third group that we have to deal with. That is Disappointing people. You're going to be disappointed in life. In fact, everybody in your life is going to disappoint you. Your friends are going to disappoint you, your family, your parents, your brothers, your sisters. They're going to disappoint you. Your husband or your wife is going to disappoint you. I'm going to disappoint you as your pastor. Why? Because nobody's perfect. Nobody's perfect!

So how do you deal with disappointing people? How does love respond when we're disappointed by people? The third thing the Bible says is *"Love is not irritable."* So I must **be gentle not judgmental**.

This week you're going to read all about how to do this in our 40 Days of Love textbook by Pastor Tom. But one of the best examples on our staff of being gentle not judgmental is Pastor Buddy. So I asked Buddy if he would come and take this point.

Buddy:

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That was a rough introduction because I think you just set me up for failure. You may not feel that way when I finish telling a story about myself, something that happened to me just on Friday – to show you how gentle and undemanding and non-irritable I can be.

I had a house full of teenagers – right there that can set you off. I had a house full of teenagers and they're getting ready for homecoming at Mission Viejo High School. Getting ready for the game. So we had to feed all these hungry people so my wife says, "Can you go to the store and get a couple of things." No problem. I love to go to the store.

So I go to the store. I get my stuff. I'm back in the car and I'm in a hurry. There's a light to get out of the parking lot and I'm the third car waiting to make this turn. The light turns green and the guy in the front does what he should do, steps on the gas, goes through the intersection – no problem. The car right in front of me doesn't. She just kind of sits there. You know how you can kind of look through the back window of the car and you can see if the driver's paying attention or looking down at something. She's looking straight ahead. She's looking right into the intersection but she's in no hurry to go anywhere. So she slowly inches her way forward and comes to the crosswalk and the light turns yellow and she stops. I'm thinking "At a boy, lady." I just sort of tapped my horn – actually I leaned on the horn. I felt a lot better about myself until I happened to look down and look at her license plate frame. Many of you probably know where I'm going with this. It said, "You matter to God. Saddleback Church." I'm thinking, "At a boy, pastor."

So literally I sort of covered my face with my hand. The light turns green and we make the turn and I took the first right I could just to get away from her hoping she didn't recognize her pastor honking the horn at her in an intersection. So much for love in action.

Let's see what the scriptures have to say about how we can be gentle and not judgmental. Galatians 6:1 says "*Brothers and sisters, if someone in your group does something wrong [especially your pastor] you who are spiritual should go to that person and gently help make him right again. But be careful, because you might be tempted to sin too.*"

You might want to circle the word "gently." I love the fact that it says gently. This is great advice for small group life. We're talking about this, reading about this, this week in Pastor Tom's book [The Relationship Principles of Jesus](#). How do you have tough conversations with people in a gentle way? How do you confront people you love when you see they're doing something they shouldn't be doing. The Bible tells us you've got to do it gently, not harshly, not in a rude or mean way. But to do it with gentleness and respect.

There's a little equation I learned from Pastor Rick: Right + Rude = Wrong.

It doesn't matter if you're right. If you're rude about it nobody's going to care what you have to say. They're immediately going to get defensive. So you do it in a gentle and a loving way. Not in a harsh or a cruel way.

Colossians 3:13. The Bible says "*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. [Notice it says whatever grievances. You can't be selective about this. Forgive whatever grievances you have against one another] and forgive as the Lord forgave you.*"



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Then in Romans 14:12, the Bible says this *“Each of us will give an account of himself to God. [We’re not going to have to give it to each other] Therefore, let’s stop passing judgment on each other.”*

It’s important to understand the difference between using your judgment and being judgmental. I’ve talked to people who let all kinds of things go on in relationships and say, “I don’t want to be judgmental.” So instead they just become victims. There’s a difference between using your judgment and being judgmental. You’ve got to use your judgment so you can see when something’s going wrong. There’s nothing wrong with doing that. You’ve got to be able to decide between wrong and right. To be able to know what the truth is. But the truth is not judgmental. It’s only judgmental when you beat somebody over the head with it. That’s when it becomes judgmental. When you start determining what their sentence is going to be.

The Bible says you’ve got to use your judgment. You’ve got to be smart about things. But you don’t have to be judgmental with people. The Bible says this in Proverbs 15:4 *“Gentle words bring life and health. A deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”* I love the way it says this in the Message paraphrase. It says *“Kind words heal and help. But cutting words wound and maim.”*

So we always have a choice when we need to speak to somebody. Especially with our kids. Have you found how cutting words can just wound and maim a child? You can hurt them for years. But the Bible says that kind words are words that will heal and help. So when your kids mess up, you don’t have to get on their case and tell them whatever you think they are at the moment. But give them a vision of how things could be like Pastor Rick was talking about a minute ago. Speak words of life and health and hope into them. Not words of judgment and harshness. But be gentle.

It’s the same way in our marriages. How many marriage problems could be strengthened if we had just waited a beat, just used words that were gentle and kind and not harsh or vindictive. There are really so few things that are worth fighting about. Even the things that we think are worth fighting about, most of them aren’t worth fighting about either. They’re just temporal. They’re going to pass. We ought to learn to cut each other some slack and be kind and gentle in our relationships.

Then there’s another verse we threw in just in case you’re having some problems at work with your boss. Ecclesiastes 10:4 *“If your boss is angry with you, don’t quit. A quiet spirit can overcome even great mistakes.”*

What that’s saying is if you mess up at work just admit it. Don’t blame it on somebody else. Don’t get all defensive and start yelling back. Just be quiet but it. Do your job. Do it well. Do it for the glory of God because you’re much more likely to find mercy if you’re humble about it than if you’re grumpy about it. So love isn’t rude and it’s not demanding. And it’s not judgmental. And Pastor Rick is going to come back and tells us about the fourth aspect of love.

Rick:

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The fourth aspect has to do with dealing with Destructive people. This is the hardest one of all. How do you love people who intentionally hurt you? Who are mean. Who are hateful. Who are manipulative. When people hurt us we have two natural tendencies. Remember it and retaliate.

First we remember it. We stockpile it in our mind. We put it back in the database and say, I'm never forgetting that one. I'm never letting them off the hook. I'm going to watch them from now on. We remember it. We rehearse it over and over and over.

The second thing we do is we retaliate. We want to get even.

But that's not what the Bible says. Love takes a step up. The Bible says "*Love keeps no record of wrongs.*"

So what does that mean? How do I respond to the people who have hurt me in my life? How do I handle all of those wounds, those pains, those hurts that I've stockpiled back there in my memory?

Here's what you do. You **don't repeat it, you delete it**. Wipe it out of the memory bank. Let it go. Forgive it and get on with your life.

Don't repeat it. What do I mean by that? Typically when we get hurt we repeat it three ways. We repeat it emotionally in our minds. We repeat it relationally as a weapon. And we repeat it practically and verbally in telling other people.

First we repeat it in our mind by going over and over and over it in your mind. We rehearse it. We've talked about this so many times. How resentment never helps you. It only hurts you. Resentment is self-destructive. It is emotional suicide. It is like taking fire in your heart. It will destroy you. When you hold on to a grudge, when you hold on to a hurt, you hold on to a bitterness, you are not hurting that person from your past. You're only hurting yourself. In fact you are allowing them to continue to hurt you in the present. Your past is past. It's over. It can't hurt you unless you choose to allow it. And the way you allow it to hurt you is by remembering it over and over.

Every time you remember and rehash and rehearse and go over it again in your mind you get hurt again. That's dumb. That's not smart. That's not using your brain the way God intended for you to use it. Resentment only perpetuates the pain. It never heals. It never solves anything.

So we repeat it over and over in our mind.

The second way we repeat it is we repeat it in fights, in relationships. We use it as wedges, as weapons. You did this, but you did that. Remember when you did that? But you did this! You pile it all back up again.

The third way we repeat it is we repeat it to other people. We talk to others. That's called gossip. We tell everybody else. We don't talk to God. We don't talk to the person. We talk to everybody else about the pain. We want to try to line up people on our side so that we're better and they're bad and they're hated as much by other people as they're hated by us.

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All three of those are destructive, damaging, and self-defeating. You're only hurting yourself by repeating it in your mind, by repeating it over and over in conversations and using it as a wedge and by repeating it to other people. Don't repeat it. Delete it. *"Love keeps no record of wrongs."*

Let me show you three verses about these three things.

First you don't rehearse it over in your mind. Leviticus 19:17 *"Do not bear a grudge against others. But settle your differences with them so you will not commit a sin because of them."* How is that possible? How do I commit a sin because of them if I keep a grudge?

Psychology study after psychology study has proven that whatever you rehearse you begin to resemble. Uh-oh! Whatever you think about most that's what you move toward. If all you think about is how much you've been hurt in the past, you're moving to the past. If you focus on the future, you move toward the future. If you focus on the promises of God, you move toward the promises of God. If you focus on potential, you move toward the potential. But if you focus on your pain, you're moving toward your pain. And whatever you rehearse you will eventually begin to resemble. I will never be like my father! I will never be like my mother! I will never... Guess what? The very fact that you're focused on it means that's what you're moving toward.

So he says you're only hurting yourself by repeating it over and over in your mind.

The second thing is you don't want to repeat it over and over in arguments. Proverbs 17:9 *"Love forgets mistakes. [You don't keep bringing them up. You don't keep a record of things you just keep bringing back as ammunition.] Nagging about them parts the best of friends."* It also parts marriages and everything else. Nagging doesn't work.

One guy said whenever I get in an argument with my wife she gets historical. She tells me everything I've ever done wrong.

We laugh at that but the truth is it destroys a lot of marriages. Bringing up the past is not the way to better your marriage because *"Love keeps no record of wrongs."*

Let me take this one deeper. Some of you in your marriage have been hurt by a partner in a major way. An unfaithfulness, a disloyalty. Some kind of thing that really, really hurt you and I'm sorry. But they came back and said, "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" And they've stayed with you and they've stuck with you and you've said "I forgive you but I'm not ever forgetting it." Back there in the back of your mind you keep repeating it and no matter what they do good, it's never good enough. Because you've got this list against them of all the things you've disappointed you and all the ways they've been destructive in your life. No matter what they do good. In your mind you've got a scale between guilt and blame. To stay mentally stable every time you feel guilty you feel like you have to blame somebody else. The rest of their life no matter how much good they do it's not enough to balance the scale. And you are unpleasable.

I'll say this tactfully but truthfully. You're killing the marriage. It's not the big sin that's killing the marriage. It's the fact that you won't let it go. You won't let it go. As a result you have become unpleasable.

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There's a third way we repeat it. "*Gossip is spread by wicked people. [Did you know that?] They stir up trouble and they break up friendships.*" Every time I share a gossip I am wicked? Did you know that every time you share a gossip you are wicked? Did you know that God hates gossip? Absolutely hates gossip. He hates it as much as he hates pride. Because that's what gossip is. Gossip is pure and simple ego. Raw, bald faced, unadulterated ego. The only reason people gossip is to make themselves feel superior to somebody else. "I know something about somebody else that makes them look bad so I think it makes me look better. I have some secret here that gives me some sense of control." It is unadulterated ego. Every time you share a gossip you just admit it. You're being prideful at that point. You are being prideful and God hates pride and gossip.

If just during forty days the people at Saddleback Church family decided that we're going to put a ban on gossip, I'm not going to listen to it, I'm not going to share it. When somebody starts gossiping say, "Sorry I'm not going to be a part of that." "*Love keeps no record of wrongs.*" You don't repeat it. You delete it.

One of the greatest tests of your love is how much you gossip. Unloving people love to gossip.

What do you do? When you're hurt you don't talk to other people about it which we typically do. We talk to everybody except the person who hurt us. You don't talk to other people. You talk to God and then you talk to that person.

The Bible says "*Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop. Leave it. Let it go. In order that your Father who is in heaven may also forgive you your own failings and shortcomings and let them drop.*" I love that in the Amplified.

Somebody says, "Rick it's been too long. I've carried this hurt for years and years and years. Maybe even decades. It's just too late." You're wrong.

I want you to hear the story of a grandmother. Would you give a warm welcome to Elaine.

Elaine: My name is Elaine. I am a mother and a grandmother who has seen the healing power of love and forgiveness transform my family, my husband and my marriage. Changes that I thought were impossible to happen and hurts that I thought would be impossible to heal happened because of Christ's healing love and forgiveness. When I got married I thought I could eventually fix all of my husband's problems. His drinking and his unfaithfulness, not realizing my own co-dependency. I lived in denial and hid my anguish and despair from my family. It seemed easier to close my eyes and look the other way and just pretend I wasn't hurting. Foolishly I put my hope in Howard's repeated promises to change. Every time I reached my limit, Howard would promise to clean up his life and change his ways. Things would get better for a short while then inevitably he would revert back to his own patterns. And I would be hurt again and again and again.

It was a vicious cycle. I kept trying band-aid approaches like let's move to a new location. After moving to California my husband started using drugs along with the alcohol. At one point he hit bottom and I got him into rehab. He stopped drinking and drugs but it didn't deal with the root of our problems. The problem was spiritual. One day Howard made a very inappropriate comment to our youngest son's wife. The fallout of that event tore our family

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apart and caused great bitterness and division. That was the final straw. I just couldn't take any more and was ready to give up on my marriage. We were living in the same house but there was no love on my part. I just could not forgive him this time. My heart had grown cold from the pain.

But on Easter in '95 our son Jim asked us if we would go to church with him. That was the first weekend here at Saddleback. Coming up the hill I saw so many people and wondered what I was getting into going to this church. I didn't know what to expect. But we saw everyone enjoying themselves and even Howard wanted to come back the next week. Through Saddleback and Harvest Crusade, Howard opened his life to Christ and I recommitted my life to Christ.

Now I began to have real hope that things could change because Jesus was included in the equation and we had God's power to help us. We took CLASS 101, were baptized and started attending Celebrate Recovery on Friday nights. What a change it all made.

Pastor Rick says God never wastes a hurt and that is true. What used to be the greatest pain in my life I now use to help others. The first twenty eight years of our marriage without Christ at the center was hell. But the thirteen years since Christ have been the greatest. And the miracle is that because of Christ's love and forgiveness to us, this February we will celebrate our forty second wedding anniversary. Because our family was torn apart several years ago I hadn't seen my son Troy through those years. I had never seen my grandson Jordan. After my marriage reconciled I began to pray for the reconciliation of our family. Then Troy and his wife had another child. It devastated me to not be invited to be there because of the bitterness. But I kept loving, praying, and thank God just recently I have been invited to go back to Rhode Island to visit them for the first time. This is another miracle step in the healing of a very broken family. My other son Jim and his wife Gail have adopted four children, including a beautiful little girl from Guatemala this past March.

Sometimes I'm asked, "How were you able to forgive 28 years of shame, grief and pain?" It is easy to forgive when you remember what it cost Jesus Christ so that I can be forgiven. He sacrificed his life for me. His love is so powerful even carrying me through my recent year and a half battle with cancer. Rick always talks about how we need supporting relationships in place before the storms come. Being a part of our Saddleback Church family and being in a small group has overwhelmed me with love and supported me through all kinds of difficulties.

Can God bring good out of bad? Can God bring healing to the hurts of betrayal and unfaithfulness and alcoholism and shame and bitterness and hopeless broken relationships? Yes. Absolutely yes. But you must do your part. You must accept Christ's love and forgiveness for yourself so you will have the power to offer forgiveness to others. I have chosen to no longer live in the past but look to the future and I'm excited to experience what God has in store for me.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is letting it go. It's a process and it's what the steps of Celebrate Recovery are all about. I don't know what you've been going through but I do know this. Just hoping things will get better doesn't work. And trying to control it yourself by will power doesn't work. What works is turning it all over to Jesus and

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following the steps he has laid out in his word. If you are serious about lasting change, come join us on Friday night at Celebrate Recovery. God bless you.

Proverbs 10:12 says this “*Hate stirs up trouble* [if you want to keep trouble in your life, just keep hate in your life] *but love forgives all offenses.*” Which of the “all” have you not let go? Which of the offenses in your life are you still holding on to?

Maybe as a child you were hurt by an adult. A teacher, an uncle, maybe even your parents. The Bible says that there will be severe judgment for child abuse, child neglect, child abandonment. One day God is going to settle the score on that. There’s no doubt about that. When God says “*Honor your father and your mother,*” he’s not saying honor their sins. He’s not saying honor their abuse, honor their selfishness, honor their poor decisions. He’s not saying ignore the pain in your life and put on a happy face and pretend everything’s great. No. Not at all. What does God expect? How does God expect me to love the destructive people who’ve hurt me?

He doesn’t expect you to ignore it. He doesn’t expect you to pretend it doesn’t exist. He’s not asking you to gloss over it or deny it or repress it. Or repress it or fake it or make excuses for the people who’ve hurt you in your life. No. In fact God doesn’t want you to fake it. He wants you to face it. Because you can’t forgive it until you face it. And you’ll never be free until you forgive and you’ll never forgive until you face it. You’ve got to stop running and you’ve got to stop blaming.

Let me take this one a little bit deeper. How you relate to your parents affects every other single relationship in your life whether you realize it or not. We pull relationship patterns into existing relationships. We often carry a lot of emotional relational baggage into our friendships, into our marriages and things like that. That affects every other relationship including our relationship to God.

The truth is some of you were hurt as kids. Maybe even by your parents. You have some unfinished business. If you’re going to become the loving woman, the loving man that God wants you to be, that you want to be, that I want you to be – that’s the whole reason we’re doing 40 Days of Love is so you can become a more loving, love filled person – you’re going to have to deal with these past issues now. You’re going to have to do some business. Because the truth is you carried a bunch forward and you’re venting on your husband or you’re venting on your wife or venting on your kids and they’re not even at fault. They’re not even the ones who caused the pain. If you’re still angry at a parent or for that matter anybody you’re still allowing them to control you. Don’t.

As your friend, as your pastor I’m saying don’t. Don’t allow that any more. You’ve got to deal with the anger. You’ve got to face it before you can forgive it. And as I said stop blaming and stop running.

Last night after the second service a man came up to me, a big smile on his face. I said what happened? He said, “I feel light. I just feel like the load’s off my back. I prayed that prayer. I didn’t realize how much baggage I was carrying around. I let it go today. I actually feel lighter, physically lighter. This is a great feeling.”

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Proverbs 19:11 says this *“When someone wrongs you it is a great virtue to ignore it.”* Just ignore it. Let it go. But you can’t ignore it until first you face it and forgive it. Then you can ignore it. And you let it go. Love lets it go.

We’re baptizing after this service today. Baptism is a symbol of letting go. It’s a symbol of saying, I’m letting go of all my old ways, all my old hurts, all my old pains, all my old sins. I’m accepting the forgiveness of God and I’m offering it to other people. It’s a new life. It’s a fresh start. Maybe you need to be baptized today. As a symbol saying, I am letting go of my own guilt to God, receiving his forgiveness. And I’m letting go of all the people who’ve hurt me so I can get on with my life.

Job 18:4 says *“You are only hurting yourself with your anger.”* 1st Corinthians 13:5 this is our memory verse for this week *“Love doesn’t keep a record of wrongs.”* That means if you’re going to be loving “Do you remember when you did this... do you remember when you did that...” *“Love does not keep a record of wrongs.”*

I don’t know who you need to forgive but I do know today’s the day. As we close I want you to think of the people who’ve hurt you in your life and I want you to let them off the hook. Love lets it go. Love forgives. Because they deserve it? No. You don’t deserve being forgiven either by God. But because it’s the right thing to do and it’s the only way to be free.

Prayer:

Father I don’t know the hurts that people are going through here today but I know that you know every one of them and you want them to be freed from it. Now you pray, “God, I’m tired of the pain. I’m tired of being stuck in the prison of the past. Father, I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired. I’m tired of wasting emotional energy on the people who’ve hurt me. Lord, I need that energy for the future, for today. Today, I’m asking you to do two things. Jesus Christ, fill me with the Spirit of forgiveness. Fill me with the Spirit of love. Take over every area of my life. I invite you into every crevice and corner of my heart. I ask you to forgive all my sins, all the ways I’ve hurt other people when I was demanding not understanding. When I was judgmental not gentle. When I was repeating the sins instead of deleting the sins. Forgive me for all of that. I want to let go of the people who have hurt me in my life. I want to do what’s right. I want you to fill my life with love. I want to be able to love others and not be stuck. So today, dear Jesus Christ, I’m in faith letting them go. I’m letting that person go. If it takes me a thousand times to do this until the pain goes away, I’m going to keep remembering, and every time they bring it up I’m going to remember to say I’m letting them go. I’m letting them off the hook. I’ve forgiven them. I have forgiven them. Help me to be tactful not just truthful. Help me to be gentle not judgmental. Help me to be understanding not demanding. When people hurt me help me to not repeat it but to delete it. To be tender without surrender to the people who I need to set boundaries with in my life. Jesus Christ, I want to become a loving person. I want to move to the higher levels of love. I ask your help and your grace. In your name I pray. Amen.”